



Office of Management's Monthly Newsletter

The Beacon

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
Office of Management
Ronald Hicks, Deputy Administrator

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bea-con (bê' ken) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or inspiration.

RON'S CORNER

New Supervisor Program

*By Ron Hicks, Deputy Administrator
Office of Management*

The transition from technical specialist to supervisor is one of the most difficult and challenging an employee will ever face. Modern organizations understand the importance of preparing new supervisors for the unique demands of interpersonal leadership. The task is accentuated by the rapid pace of change that is transforming the way work is accomplished. As FSIS moves from a traditional regulatory role to one of farm-to-table service, the success of its mission increasingly depends on skilled and flexible first line leaders.

To achieve this, the Agency is pleased to announce a comprehensive two-week training program for employees who have become supervisors within the last three years: the New Supervisor Program (NSP). Offered as an on-going component of the Management and Leadership Development Program (MLDP), the NSP is designed to develop an array of core leadership skills required to successfully manage people in today's environment.

Emphasizing the themes of collaboration, team building and conflict management, the NSP is the product of a joint effort by FSIS and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The curriculum includes the latest offerings of OPM's national training program for new managers, as well in-depth exposure to the FSIS performance management system and other Agency-specific training. Situational leadership, dynamic problem solving and briefing/presentation skills are also covered. Multi-source assessment--using one of the latest instruments on the market—is an important part of NSP.

The two week curriculum is divided at mid point into two sessions, separated by a four month period back on the job. The purpose of this structure is to provide participants with the opportunity to apply new learnings while carrying out a management project of their choice at their work site.

All NSP training is situated at OPM's Management Development Center in Denver, Colorado. It is envisioned that two classes composed of 25 participants per class will receive training in the present fiscal year. NSP will be repeated in future years as necessary. For further information, contact Mary Stevenson at (202) 720-4937.

In Memory - Thank You

This message was recently received in the FSIS Webmaster mailbox from Jo Ann Hillery, Jean Hillery's daughter. Linda Eckrich and Neil Omansky did a wonderful job of creating this Web page in memory of our lost colleagues, Jean Hillery and Thomas Quadros. We are deeply touched that Jo Ann finds comfort in it.

My name is Jo Ann Hillery, and my mother is Jean Hillery, who was murdered on June 21, 2000 in the line of duty. I wanted to thank you for keeping the memoriam website address up and running. This has been a very troublesome time for me and my family and it is nice to see that my mother is remembered respectfully, along with Tom Quadros and Bill Shaline.

Sincere thanks,
Jo Ann Hillery



Note: The memorium website is located at:

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/topics/memorial.htm>

VDIP

Conflict Resolution Process – Step 4 - Finding A Solution

By Milo Christianson, LERD

Telephone: 612-370-2000

This is the last in a series of articles dealing with a conflict resolution process that individuals can use to resolve their disagreements without the use of a third party intervenor. The first three steps in the process – *Arranging the Meeting*, *Opening the Meeting* and *Discussing the Issues* – were described in earlier issues of The Beacon. In this issue, we will look at Step 4 – *Finding a Solution*.

Finding a mutually agreeable solution to a dispute is, of course, the ultimate objective of the resolution process. To arrive at the point where such a solution is possible, however, it is important that the first three steps in the process be carried out successfully. These steps lay the foundation for effective solutions.

In practice, a solution may arise at nearly any point in the resolution process. Someone may, for example, offer a solution at the opening of the meeting. More commonly, solutions emerge as issues are being discussed. The point is that the generation of solutions should not be seen as something that only occurs neatly at the end of a long process. Sometimes it does, and sometimes it does not. If a potential solution arises early in the process, jot it down and continue on with the discussion. Continuing on is important, so that all issues get a proper airing and so that all solutions are explored.

The formal solution identification process looks like this:

1. *Brainstorm Options for Mutual Gain.*

Here are a few of the more important rules:

- All participants are given an opportunity to suggest solutions.
- All ideas are acceptable. There is no evaluation of the ideas presented.
- The process continues until all ideas are identified.
- Items are discussed, clarified and, if necessary, deleted or combined.

2. *Compare Options Against Objective Criteria.*

This is done to determine the relative worth of each option. For example, if one person in a dispute wants the window open and the other wants it closed, the criteria against which the solution is measured may be that “both/all parties have a right to work in a comfortable environment.”

3. *Select the Best Option(s).*

This is a joint exercise of the parties since solutions work best when both/all parties agree to them.

To summarize, the conflict resolution process consists of four steps – *Arranging the Meeting*, *Opening the Meeting*, *Discussing the Issues* and *Finding a Solution*. If you are involved in a dispute, try this process to see if it works for you. If not, perhaps you may wish to request intervention of a third party by calling the Voluntary Dispute Intervention Program at 1-800-860-8347.

SUPPLIES

New Item Available - Ibuprophen

By Pete Bridgeman, Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4222

Mary Hollrah, of Corydon, IN, in the Chicago District writes, "The inspectors have asked if I would check and see if ibuprofen could be ordered from the supply office. There are a lot of muscle aches due to the nature of the job. They would prefer to take ibuprofen to help reduce the swelling, instead of so much aspirin for the pain. Please inquire into this for us." While we already do provide Aspirin (FSIS-53-AS) and Acetaminophen (FSIS-53-AC), we agree that Ibuprophen should also be made available as a first aid item, and are now stocking it, as Item Number FSIS-53-IB. The Unit of Issue is Bottle (100 tablets to a bottle).

Nitrile Protective Gloves - FSIS-51-

Several sizes of the green nitrile protective gloves were out of stock for over a month, during February and March. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused. We had difficulty getting these in stock in sufficient quantities to satisfy all of the back-orders. A large order recently arrived at the Field Supply Center, and you should receive any back-orders you had for these by early April.

FSC Still Hasn't Moved....

Believe it or not, the FSC still hasn't moved to Beltsville. Orders are still being filled at Landover. Fire safety problems related to the sprinkler system have been the latest cause for delays. They're hoping to move by early May, but at this point, they're not making any promises! We'll let you know when they have actually moved. In the meantime, all orders sent to either location, Landover or Beltsville, are being picked up and filled in a timely manner. If you have any problems with missing items or missing orders, call the toll free supply line at 1-800-714-8335 with the order number and the problem.

Once the move has taken place, we will make the revised supply catalog available, both in printed form and in electronic version, and prepare to implement electronic ordering. Thank you for your patience. We'll keep you posted!

COMPUTER USE

Employee Computer Use

By Roslyn Robinson, Labor and Employee Relations Division

Telephone: 202-720-5657

FSIS has formed a working group to explore the need for policy clarification and a possible policy change on the *personal use of computers, electronic mail, and the Internet*. As more and more of our employees have access to the Internet and are able to send and receive e-mail, we are finding some questionable computer activity taking place during official government time.

In the past, our Agency has maintained the policy that using the Internet and sending e-mails for any personal use while on government time could be considered misconduct. However, more flexible policies are being implemented by other government agencies and recommended by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Therefore, FSIS personal computer use policies are being reviewed, and changes may be forthcoming.

Of immediate concern is the use of the e-mail to send lengthy messages and messages with graphic enclosures, to groups of employees. During December 2000, there was excessive use of the Outlook system to send well meaning holiday greetings with a wide distribution. It resulted in the Automated Information Systems Division (AISD) sending a cautionary message to all users about that inappropriate use of the e-mail system.

The working group is looking into the appropriate personal use of government computers, to include the use of government computers to complete job applications.

An Outlook public folder will be set up to receive employee comments for this working group. However, until the folder has been established, all comments and questions can be sent to Roslyn Robinson via Outlook. Bargaining unit employees should send their comments through the appropriate union representative.

Until you receive further guidance on this matter, please consult with your supervisor if you have a question on reasonable use of your computer.

VEHICLES

State Tag Requests

*By Pete Bridgeman, Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 301-504-4222*

If you drive a government vehicle and feel that your safety is in any way compromised by the display of government tags on the vehicle, you may request to have the government tags removed and have state tags issued for the vehicle.

The guiding regulation on this is Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 41, Part 102-34.180, "Identifying and Registering Motor Vehicles - Motor Vehicle Identification - Limited Exemptions."

Requests for a limited exemption to have the government tags replaced by state tags should be submitted in writing to this office (see address below). We ask that you include the government tag number of your vehicle and the reasons for your request. In most cases, we will forward the request with a recommendation for approval to the department level. This process usually takes several weeks. If there is an urgent need to get approval faster than this, please let us know your situation so we can try to expedite this process.

Once the request has been approved at the department level, this office will notify the District Office, the driver and the GSA Fleet Management Center (FMC). In most cases, the District Office, driver and GSA will need to coordinate with the state's Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to obtain the state tags. The procedure varies state to state, and each FMC may handle it a little differently. The registration cost for state tags will come out of district funds.

Address to send requests to:

USDA, FSIS, ASD, PMB
Attention: Brian McNiff
5601 Sunnyside Ave - 2L-190-D
Beltsville, MD 20705-5230

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Multi-District Safety Poster Contest (Atlanta, Jackson, Raleigh)

*By G. Ray Kobaly, Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 404-562-5961*

The Atlanta, Jackson and Raleigh Multi-District Safety & Health Committee announces a Safety Poster Contest! The poster should focus on safety ideas that prevent accidents in the work areas in which individuals perform their duties.

Multi-District Safety Poster Contest Procedures:

- Entries are to be in black and white, completely hand-drawn, and on 8 1/2 X 11 plain bond paper.
- Posters must be in the Landscape (horizontal or wide) format.
- Entrants must be permanent full-time employees of the Atlanta, Jackson, or Raleigh Districts, Field Operations, FSIS.
- Entries are limited to one submittal per employee and must be received at the address listed below by the close of business, June 1, 2001. The employee's Name, District and Circuit should appear on the back of the poster.

Send your poster to:

G. Ray Kobaly, Safety and Health Specialist
USDA, FSIS, ASD, EHSB
100 Alabama Street, SW
1924 Building, Suite 3R90
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3104

The Multi-District Safety and Health Committee will select 1st through 4th place poster winners from each district's entries at its July, 2001 meeting. Each winner must be on the roles at the time selections are made. The 1st place winner of each district will be presented with an eight hour time-off award and certificate from the District Manager. Winners 2nd through 4th place will receive a Non-Monetary Award Item selected by the Committee.

TRAVEL

Potential Airline Strike: Spring 2001

By Dawn Ruffner, Budget Division

Telephone: 202-720-2210

There is the potential for one or more airlines to be involved in a strike or work stoppage during the period of early spring to summer 2001. In the event of a strike, the travel management centers will work closely with employees and, if necessary, reschedule reservations on another airline. With the Federal Government having 93,000 employees on travel on any business day, there will certainly be travelers with questions on what to do. Here are a few tips on easing the burden of traveling during this unstable period.

- Make travel plans early. Do not wait until the last minute.
- Have the travel management center's phone numbers ready for easy reference.
- Provide your home and/or cell phone numbers to the travel management center so they can contact you regarding any changes.
- Ask your travel management center to issue you a paper ticket in lieu of an e-ticket if you are ticketed on one of the potential striking airlines. Keep in mind that there is a delivery fee for paper tickets. This fee may be reimbursed as a miscellaneous expense on the travel voucher.
- If e-tickets are issued, another option is to ask the air carrier to print a paper ticket and take that ticket to a new carrier for an exchange. Only paper tickets can be exchanged with other airlines.
- Check arrival and departure times frequently. Call the airlines prior to leaving your home or hotel. Reconfirm flight arrangements 24 hours prior to flight time for domestic flights and 72 hours in advance for foreign travel.
- Check in early at the airport in case of last minute delays or cancellations. You may have better luck in re-scheduling at the airport.
- Be aware of all the airlines that serve your destination. You may need to use a non-striking one. Employees may use non-contract airlines if the government contracted flight is canceled due to a strike.
- Postpone travel if it is not mission essential.
- Use an alternative to traveling such as teleconferencing.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Public Transportation (Transit) Benefit Program

By Performance Evaluation & Recognition Branch

Telephone: 202-720-7983

Last October, FSIS implemented a Public Transportation Benefit program for eligible employees. Eligible employees are those who commute to and from work using a form of mass transit (bus, light rail, subway, ferry, train) or vanpool (with at least 6 members in addition to the driver) and who apply for the benefit. Eligible employees whose applications are approved receive fare media subsidized by the Agency in an amount equal to their actual commuting costs up to a maximum of \$65.00 per month. Over 650 FSIS headquarters and field employees are now participating in the program and receive their fare media on a quarterly distribution basis from the Department of Transportation's (DOT's) Transerve Service Center.

The next quarterly distribution of fare media will be held in late March/early April. Headquarters employees will have received a distribution schedule electronically by the time they receive this newsletter. Field employees will receive their fare media on a quarterly basis unless other arrangements have been made by DOT, due to local transit authority restrictions.

If you ride mass transit or a vanpool and have already applied for the transit benefit, you do not need to complete another application unless one of the following occur:

- You cease using any form of mass transit listed above (e.g., you decide to carpool instead).
- You change your mode of mass transportation from one type to another (e.g., light rail to ferry).
- Your actual commuting costs increase or decrease (e.g., your costs decrease because you go on temporary duty travel for more than two weeks, or your costs increase because you start taking the bus to the metro station instead of driving your car to the metro station).
- You separate from FSIS (e.g., you go to another Federal agency or you move from one agency in USDA to another).
- You receive a free USDA or other Federal agency parking benefit (e.g., you decide to carpool with other employees in another federal agency with a free parking space and then take the metro to your building; this would make you ineligible).

In these instances or any others where the facts on the original application change, employees must complete a revised Transit program application indicating the change or cancellation.

Separating employees currently receiving the benefit or other employees who find they are no longer eligible for transit benefits due to changing circumstances, should complete a revised application and return the unused portion of the fare media with a revised application indicating "cancellation". Please assure that any returned fare media is not stapled. Fare media should be returned via certified mail or personally delivered to the Transit Coordinator. (In HQ, do not send fare media through interoffice mail.) All new and revised transit applications must be signed by the employee and the FSIS Transit Coordinator or the Branch Chief, Performance, Evaluation and Recognition Branch (PERB).

New employees may apply for transit benefits at anytime they begin using mass transit and become eligible. A newly issued USDA application form is attached to this issue. Transit subsidy benefits are effective on the date of the employee's signed application, therefore you should not make a request in advance of when you will actually become eligible unless you specify a specific start-up date.

Field employees should submit their transit applications through the Transit Coordinator in their local field office, who will verify information and forward it to the FSIS Transit Coordinator, Michele Clarke, in PERB. The FSIS Transit Coordinator will forward all FSIS applications to DOT. Applications may be submitted initially by fax (202-690-2773), but the original copy of the application must also follow by mail, due to DOT's requirement for original signatures on the certification statement.

If you have any questions on the program, please contact your local field office Transit Coordinator or Michele Clarke, on 202-720-7983.

Leave Transfer Recipients

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. <u>Jackie Copeland</u>
OFO, DC; Illness | 8. <u>Tammy Love</u>
OFO, AR; Surgery | 15. <u>Eusebio Galindo</u>
OFO, TX; Serious Illness |
| 2. <u>Annie Stewart</u>
POB, MN; Serious Illness | 9. <u>Sue Engels</u>
OFO, IA; Family Illness | 16. <u>Becky Schneider</u>
OFO, CO; Illness |
| 3. <u>Linda Cole</u>
OPPDE, DC; Serious Illness | 10. <u>Aurbrey Tribble</u>
OFO, FL; Serious Illness | 17. <u>OFO-00-0030*</u>
OFO, WV; Surgery |
| 4. <u>Linda Carey</u>
EMS, DC; Surgery | 11. <u>John French</u>
OFO, GA; Family Illness | 18. <u>OFO-00-0034*</u>
OFO, NJ; Surgery |
| 5. <u>Betty Morgan</u>
OFO, AR; Family Illness | 12. <u>Clement Grangier</u>
OFO, MD; Serious Illness | 19. <u>Beverly Winston</u>
OFO, GA; Maternity |
| 6. <u>Carolyn Woolfolk</u>
OFO, DC; Family Illness | 13. <u>OFO-00-0006*</u>
OFO, AL; Illness | 20. <u>Barbara Males</u>
OFO, NY; Serious Illness |
| 7. <u>OFO-99-0027*</u>
OFO, NC; Surgery | 14. <u>Randy Haggard</u>
OFO, TX; Serious illness | 21. <u>Donald Palmer</u>
OFO, KS; Family Illness |
| 22. <u>Leslie Buzzell</u>
OFO, ME; Surgery | 32. <u>Geraldine Woods</u>
OFO, TX; Surgery | 42. <u>Melanie Norman</u>
OFO, TX; Serious Illness |

23. <u>Stephanie Kane</u> OPPDE, DC; Surgery	33. <u>Sheila Mote</u> OFO; NC; Surgery	43. <u>James Kile</u> OFO, NE; Surgery
24. <u>Lula Wallace</u> OPPDE, DC; Maternity	34. <u>Wilma Hoch</u> OFO, IA; Surgery	44. <u>Annetta Turner</u> OFO, DC; Surgery
25. <u>Margarita Fiol</u> OFO, PR; Illness	35. <u>Frances Flecher</u> OFO, MN; Surgery	45. <u>Osmar Ponce</u> OFO, CA; Surgery
26. <u>Lois Mullens</u> OFO, AL; Serious Illness	36. <u>Wynne Molloy</u> OFO, AR; Serious Illness	46. <u>Marvin Miller</u> OFO, NE; Surgery
27. <u>Dolores Bradley-Vargas</u> OFO, GA; Serious Illness	37. <u>Linda Reohr</u> OFO, NY; Surgery	47. <u>Robert Vincenty</u> OFO, PR; Illness
28. <u>Janet O'Byrne</u> OFO, MN; Serious Illness	38. <u>Linda Kendrick</u> OFO, AR; Surgery	48. <u>Kathy Richmond</u> OFO, LA, Serious Illness
29. <u>George Troups</u> OFO, LA; Serious Illness	39. <u>Sandra Wasserman</u> OM, MN; Serious Illness	49. <u>Wilda Barnes</u> OFO, KY; Surgery
30. <u>Kelly Mitchell</u> OFO, DC; Serious Illness	40. <u>Steven Casey</u> OFO, WA; Serious Illness	50. <u>Patricia Rogers</u> OFO, AR; Serious Illness
31. <u>Tammy Bergerson</u> OFO, MO; Surgery	41. <u>Timothy Trogon</u> OFO, PA; Family Illness	51. <u>Linda Burkes</u> OFO, CA; Serious Illness

52. <u>Anthony Laudadio</u> OFO, NY; Family Illness	54. <u>Lisa Cleveland</u> OFO, GA; Maternity	56. <u>Tonya L. Johnson</u> OM, DC, Illness
53. <u>Judy St. Clair</u> OFO, KS, Illness	55. <u>OFO-01-0014*</u> OFO, FL; Illness	

* While not consenting to the publication of their names, certain LTP recipients are assigned a number that they may provide to their co-workers if they choose so that donated leave may be transferred to their account. Any questions on the LTP should be referred to the Human Resources Field Office on 1-800-370-3747 for field employees and to the Classification and Compensation Branch for HQ employees on 202-720-6287.

February/March Retirements

Walter R. Blevins, FI, OFO, Wilkesboro, NC, 3/02/01, 29 Years
Judith C. Colaw, FI, OFO, Emporia, KS, 3/10/01, 6 Years
Linda W. Copeland, CSI, OFO, Murrayville, GA, 3/02/01, 35 Years
Adelaido H. Dela Cruz, SVMO, OFO, Canby, OR, 3/02/01, 32 Years
James M. Duvall, FI, OFO, Danville, AR, 2/28/01, 30 Years
Verna L. Ebberts, CSI, OFO, Junction City, KS, 3/07/01, 21 Years
Larry L. Gerner, FI, OFO, Robards, KY, 2/24/01, 8 Years
Leslie F. Gojkovich, FI, OFO, Fort Morgan, CO, 2/26/01, 7 Years
Alvera L. Griffin, FI, OFO, West Point, NE, 2/24/01, 15 Years
Richard E. Hauser, CSI, OFO, Council Bluffs, IA, 3/03/01, 41 Years
Gary E. Joines, FI, OFO, Storm Lake, IA, 2/20/01, 30 Years
Frances C. Martir, FI, OFO, Wilkesboro, NC, 2/24/01, 8 Years
Emily R. Norris, Secy OA, OM, Wash D.C., 2/28/01, 22 Years
Gene H. Price, CSI, OFO, Indianapolis, IN, 2/28/01, 30 Years
Mike L. Schwochert, SVMO, OFO, Fort Morgan, CO, 2/10/01, 7 Years
Beth M. Sheckler, FI, OFO, Grand Island, NE, 3/10/01, 4 Years
William E. Stafford, CSI, OFO, Bedford, VA, 2/24/01, 31 Years
Rosie M. Stephenson, CSI, OFO, Center, TX, 2/01/01, 27 Years
Steven G. Stoops, VMO, OFO, College Station, TX, 2/28/01, 20 Yrs.
Vernon J. Thornbrugh, CSI, OFO, Crete, NE, 3/03/01, 35 Years
Royce A. Towns Jr., FI, OFO, Nixon, TX, 3/03/01, 34 Years
Lorraine Vargas, FI, OFO, Friona, TX, 2/24/01, 4 Years
Joann L. Williams, FI, OFO, Alma, GA, 2/24/01, 4 Years
Melissa A. Wright, FI, OFO, Heavener, OK, 2/24/01, 3 Years

Deaths In Service

Mr. Darrell W. Ames, FI, OFO, Decatur, AR, 1/19/01
Mr. James W. Knight, CSI, OFO, Oviedo, FL, 1/20/01
Mr. Edward J. Hazuka, CSI, OFO, Omaha, NE, 2/18/01
Mr. Allen L. Bullerman, CSI, OFO, Thief River Falls, MN, 2/25/01
Dr. Sharon Romero, VMO, OFO, Tucumcari, NM, 3/2/01

Performance Standards (M-Z)
By the Human Resources Field Office
Telephone: 1-800-370-3747

For the M-Z employees, grades 1-12, supervisors need to establish new standards no later than May 31, 2001, which will cover the rating period May 1, 2001, to April 30, 2002. To establish standards, supervisors discuss with the employee the new performance elements/standards. For most employees who are covered by Users' Guides, the elements and critical designations are preprinted on FSIS Form 4430-5. For employees not covered by Users' Guides, the standards are established by completing FSIS Form 4430-6, using FSIS Form 4430-5 as a coversheet. Once the required signatures are obtained, a copy of the form should be given to the employee and a copy submitted through channels to the Servicing Personnel Office. (Bargaining Unit employees only)

Federal Income Tax Withholding

Am I having too much federal income tax withheld, or not enough? If you want to make a change, you only need to complete a Form W-4, Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate. (This form can be ordered from the Field Supply Center, unit of issue is EA). Once the form is completed, mail it directly to your Servicing Personnel Office in Minneapolis, Minnesota or Washington, DC. Don't wait until April 15 before you make a change. Changes can be made at any time.

Outreach Contacts With Prospective Food Inspector And VMO Applicants
By the Human Resources Systems Section, HRFO
Telephone: 612-370-2000

For entry-level field Food Inspector and Veterinarian positions, the appropriate office to receive completed applications is the Human Resources Field Office (HRFO), Human Resources Systems Section (HRSS), located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This office provides prospective applicants with application materials upon request. To aid in this process, we have created a toll-free phone number (1-800-370-3747) whereby individuals may call and provide their name, mailing address, phone number, and the type of application packet needed. In addition, an Internet email address has been established for application material requests, at: jesgar@ag.gov. Copies of application material have been placed on HRFO's Internet Worldwide Web site for viewing or downloading, at: <http://www.net.usda.gov/fsis/pob>.

In addition, local supervisors and employees often have the unique opportunity to interact with individuals who may be considering Federal employment. The HRSS distributes quantities of both intermittent and full-time Food Inspector application packets to District Managers and, through them, down to plant IIC's to assist in these outreach contacts. For the process to work efficiently, it is vital that only current and complete application packets are provided to potential candidates for employment. The contents of the Food Inspector and Veterinarian application packets are summarized below to help local officials be assured that they have only up-to-date and complete information on hand. If you have questions, please contact Tom Reimler at 612-370-2000.

Veterinary Medical Officer Application Packet
By the Human Resources Systems Section, HRFO
Telephone: 800-370-3747

To receive a Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) information and application packet, please call the USDA/FSIS Human Resource Field Office, Human Resource Systems Section at 1-800-370-3747.

Included in this application packet will be:

- An introduction letter.
- An information letter describing the career opportunities in veterinary medicine.
- An information letter describing veterinarian employment opportunities.
- An Applicant Supplemental Sheet (Form AD-1086).

- A letter describing the elements required to be considered for veteran's preference.
- The Veterinary Medical Officer Competition Notice booklet.
- An Optional Application for Federal Employment (Form OF-612).

An applicant for a VMO may choose no more than nine geographical areas in which to work. There is no exam required for this position. The applicant must submit either the OF-612 or a resume describing their qualifications, along with the Employment Availability Statement on the back cover of the competition notice booklet.

Food Inspector Application Packets

Full-Time Food Inspector

To receive a Full-time Food Inspector information and application packet, please call the USDA/FSIS Human Resource Field Office, Human Resource Systems Section at 1-800-370-3747. Included in this application packet will be:

- An introduction letter
- A letter describing the elements to be considered for veteran's preference
- An addendum to Food Inspector/Veterinary Medical Officer Competition Notice describing CTAP & ICTAP elements for displaced/surplus Federal and USDA Employees
- The Food Inspector Competition Notice booklet
- An information sheet describing the functional requirements and environmental factors
- An information sheet describing the career opportunities of a food inspector
- A Food Inspector Questionnaire
- Optional Application for Federal Employment (Form OF-612)
- A testing schedule of the current quarter with a test card

To be considered for a position as a Full-time Food Inspector, the applicant must meet the qualifications listed on page two of the Competition Notice booklet. The applicant must also take the food inspector exam, which consists of general knowledge with some mathematics. The exam is roughly three to four hours long. The Food Inspector applicant must send either the Food Inspector Questionnaire, or the OF-612, or a resume describing their qualifications, along with the test card indicating a current testing site, postmarked before the indicated deadline on the test schedule.

Intermittent Food Inspector

To receive an Intermittent Food Inspector information and application packet, please call the USDA/FSIS Human Resource Field Office, Human Resource Systems Section at 1-800-370-3747. Included in this application packet will be:

- An introduction letter
- A letter describing the intermittent tour of duty
- An information sheet describing the functional requirements and environmental factors
- An information sheet describing the basic qualifications.
- A listing of the geographical codes for the five areas that you wish to work
- An Optional Application for Federal Employment (Form OF-612)

To be considered for a position as an Intermittent Food Inspector, the applicant is not required to take the food inspector exam. The applicant can choose up to five geographical areas in which to work. Please note that these geographical codes are not the same as the codes used for Full-time Food Inspector. The nature of this position is "on-call" and not a permanent position.

VMO/SVMO Open Continuous Vacancy Announcement

Field veterinarians interested in promotion to GS-12 positions are reminded that they can submit an application for consideration at any time to the nationwide open continuous vacancy announcement, Announcement Number FSIS-M-23(97), maintained in HRFO in Minneapolis. This announcement is used to fill all GS-701-12 field positions throughout the U.S. Separate announcements are not issued for specific locations.

One application can be submitted to request consideration for multiple locations. Applications are maintained in HRFO and referred to District Offices, when requested by the District. Applications remain on file for up to 5 years, provided the employee submits a current performance appraisal annually. Contact Bonnie Falk or Darcy Long at 1-800-370-3747, extension 2528 or 2572, for questions about this announcement.

Coming Attraction: Web-Based Distance Learning Pilot

By Mary Stevenson, Organization and Employee Development Branch

Telephone: 202-720-4937

Imagine, if you will, a learning experience where an employee simply logs on to their computer, registers with a password to access a desired training course, and completes the training course at their own pace. Imagine that they can also take the training at their own pace, use an on-line tracking procedure to keep their own progress reports, and test out when and where they feel like it. It may be hard to imagine, but online learning is coming to a desktop PC near you.

FSIS will soon be offering a pilot group of employees a comprehensive library of web-delivered, self-directed training courses that will be accessible directly from an employee's desktop PC. This initiative is not meant to replace traditional classroom training, but rather to augment it when traditional training is unavailable or cost prohibitive. By becoming a member of a federal online learning consortium, FSIS will have access to two Internet-based libraries with over 700 courses. Course opportunities will range from professional development to computer skill development. The professional development series offers a wide variety of courses to help employees strengthen their skills in -- just to mention a few -- management, leadership, team building, communications, and project management. The computer skill development series represents a broad range of the most current technical courses that could help desktop PC users -- and even IT professionals -- sharpen their skills.

The FSIS E-Learning Pilot Program will begin in the spring 2001, and will be evaluated both in terms of the quality of the delivered content and its impact on job performance. Initial participation in the pilot will be from groups within the Agency who have been nominated by senior management. Additional employees will be added to this group of online learners within the year.

ESRA

USDA Employees' Cookbook!

By Vikki Beaty, Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4223

The USDA Employee Services and Recreation Association (ESRA) wants to involve all employees of the USDA in an exciting new project! ESRA is publishing a USDA employees' cookbook, filled to the brim with the best recipes from the best cooks in the Department of Agriculture -- and they need your favorite recipes! The cookbooks will be 6"x9", with plastic comb binding. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the cookbooks will go to a scholarship fund set-up for USDA Child-Care Centers, to help off-set the child-care cost.

ESRA would like to have three or four of your favorite recipes before May 1, 2001. They will select one or more of your recipes to be included in the USDA-ESRA cookbook. Your name will even be printed in the cookbook with each of your own recipes!

ESRA is anticipating a great demand for these cookbooks, so they want to be certain they are ordering enough copies. It would help immensely if you tell them how many cookbooks you want reserved in your name...remember, if you don't reserve your copies now, they may not have a cookbook for you, later!

Please complete the form in the *ESRA Presents*, Volume 13 Issue 3, March 2001, or send an email to usdaesra@erols.com, and provide the number of cookbooks you want to reserve. Include your name, agency, daytime phone number, and email address; or, visit the ESRA website, at <http://www.usdaesra.org>, print the form, complete it, and fax it to 202-690-2737, (or, for HQ employees, drop it by the ESRA AG Connection).

This USDA Employees' cookbook will most definitely become a cherished keepsake on your kitchen shelf. Hurry and get your recipe submitted and your copies ordered!

ISSUANCES

Recent Agency Issuances

By Corinne Calhoun, Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4233

The Directives Management Section has completed the 2001 edition of the FSIS Directives Numeric and Subject Index. The Index includes all FSIS directives issued as of 1/1/01. Copies have been printed and distributed to FSIS offices. Each calendar year quarter, an FSIS Checklist will supplement the Index, listing directives and notices issued during that quarter. The Index and many recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" Lan Intranet server (\\Dchqoms1\fsisapps\pcdials\pcdials.htm) and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

FSIS Notices 11-01 (2/20/01), 2001 Pay Increase, and 12-01 (3/15/01), Travel Management Center Transaction Fees, have been issued since the March 2001 edition of The Beacon.

Directives and notices are distributed automatically to applicable Agency employees and offices. Additional copies are available from:

USDA FSIS ASD PMS
MAILDROP 5241
5601 SUNNYSIDE AVENUE
BELTSVILLE MD 20705-5241

TEL (301) 504-4242
FAX (301) 504-4277

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The current and past editions of *The Beacon* are available electronically in the "Newsletters" public folder on the Exchange (Outlook) mail system as well as on the FSIS Website at: www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm

Attachment 1

Thrift Savings Plan
C, F, and G Fund Monthly Returns
 Updated March 8, 2001

Months	C Fund	S&P 500 Stock Index	F Fund	Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate Bond Index	G Fund
1996 (Jan. - Dec.)	22.85%	22.96%	3.66%	3.63%	6.76%
1997 (Jan. - Dec.)	33.17%	33.36%	9.60%	9.65%	6.77%
1998 (Jan. - Dec.)	28.44%	28.58%	8.70%	8.69%	5.74%
1999 (Jan. - Dec.)	20.95%	21.04%	(0.85%)	(0.82%)	5.99%
2000 (Jan. - Dec.)	(9.14)%	(9.10)%	11.67%	11.63%	6.42%
2000	%	%	%	%	%
March	9.74	9.78	1.32	1.32	.55
April	(2.98)	(3.01)	(0.29)	(0.29)	.52
May	(2.05)	(2.05)	(0.03)	(0.05)	.54
June	2.44	2.47	2.07	2.08	.53
July	(1.56)	(1.56)	0.89	0.91	.53
August	6.19	6.21	1.46	.145	.52
September	(5.27)	(5.28)	.64	.63	.49
October	(0.40)	(0.42)	.66	.66	.51
November	(7.87)	(7.88)	1.65	1.64	.48
December	0.50	0.49	1.86	1.86	.48
2001					
January	3.55	3.55	1.65	1.63	.46
February	(9.12)	(9.12)	0.87	0.87	.42
Last 12 Months *	(8.19)	(8.20)	13.51	13.44	6.20

Percentages in () are negative.

The C Fund is invested in the Barclays Equity Index Fund, which tracks the S&P 500 stock index. The F Fund is invested in the Barclays U.S. Debt Index Fund, which tracks the Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate bond index. The G Fund is invested in special issues of U.S. Treasury securities.

The monthly C, F, and G Fund returns represent net earnings for the month, after deduction of accrued administrative expenses. The C and F Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees.

The C, F, and G Fund monthly returns are dollar-weighted: they reflect net earnings on the changing balances invested during the month.

* The C, F, and G Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month and assume earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

The C and F Fund returns vary from the index returns because of C and F Fund expenses, changing balances in the C and F Funds, and differences in returns between the Barclays funds and the underlying indexes. The index returns are time-weighted: they assume constant dollar balances invested during each month and throughout the period.

Future performance of the three funds will vary and may be significantly different from the returns shown above. See the "Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan" for detailed information about the funds and their investment risks.

Attachment 2

Check Action

New: _____

Change: _____

Cancellation: _____

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION BENEFIT PROGRAM APPLICATION
(Please type or print legibly in blue or black ink)

Faremedia
returned and
enclosed

\$ _____

USDA Agency Code (For example: 02 for Agricultural Marketing Research): _____

A. Applicant Information:

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ MI: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Work Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Work Telephone Number: _____ SSN: _____

Prior to applying for this benefit, did you drive to work or use some form of mass transit? _____

B. Modes of Transportation to be used to and from workplace:

Please provide the name of the transit company/system that you use in the space below:

Bus _____ Light Rail _____ Subway _____ Train _____ Ferry _____

Authorized *Commuter Highway Vehicle (Van pool) _____ Other (explain) _____

*Any authorized vehicle with a seating capacity of at least 6 adults (not including the driver). At least 80 percent of the total mileage use of this vehicle can reasonably be expected to be for purposes of transporting persons in connection with travel between their residences and their place of employment. During these trips passengers will number at least ½ of the adult seating capacity (not including the driver).

Please provide the specific type of faremedia you use (e.g. ticket, pass, token, etc.): _____

C. Employee Certification:

WARNING: This certification concerns a matter with the jurisdiction of an agency of the United States and making a false, fictitious, or fraudulent certification may render the maker subject to criminal prosecution under title 18, United States Code, Section 1001, Civil Penalty Action, providing for administrative recoveries of up to \$10,000 per violation, and/or agency disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal.

*I certify that I am employed by the Department of Agriculture.**I certify that I am eligible for a public transportation fare benefit, will use it for my daily commute to and from work, and will not give sell, or transfer it to anyone else.**I certify that I am not a member of a car pool.**I certify that the monthly transit benefit I am receiving does not exceed my monthly commuting costs.**I certify that in any given month, I will not use the Government-provided transit benefit in excess of the statutory limit.**If my commuting costs per month on public transit exceed the monthly statutory limit, then I will supplement those additional costs with my own funds rather than use a Government-provided transit benefit designated for use in a future month.*

I certify that my usual monthly commuting costs exclusive of parking are: \$ _____ Agency Maximum Subsidy: _____

Employee Original Signature: _____ Date: _____

D. Transit Subsidy Coordinator:

Name: _____ Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT: This information is solicited under authority of Public Law 101-509. Furnishing the information on this form is voluntary, but failure to do so may result in disapproval of your request for a public transit fare benefit. The purpose of this information is to facilitate timely processing of your request, to ensure your eligibility, and to prevent misuse of the funds involved. This information will be matched with lists at other Federal agencies of Government-assigned parking to ensure consistency with mode of transportation checked.
(Revised 2/28/01)